

From: Marc Shargel [mailto:enviro@lumigenic.com]
Sent: Tuesday, December 07, 2004 1:50 PM
To: Melissa Miller-Henson
Subject: Comments to the MLPA Task Force

Dear Ms. Miller-Henson,

Please find below comments from The Coalition of Organizations for Ocean Life on the Task Force's Project Area and Stakeholder Involvement documents. I realize we are late in submitting these, and will understand if that fact reduces the amount of consideration they can receive. I am sadly aware that so far COOL is a perfect zero-for-two in meeting comment deadlines! We'll be addressing the internal challenges that have produced this dismal initial record of punctuality shortly. Meantime, I hope you can smile at our tardiness, and once again, accept our thanks for doing an important job well.

Gratefully,
Marc Shargel

The Coalition of Organizations for Ocean Life
Defenders of Wildlife | The Marine Mammal Center
The Natural Resources Defense Council | The Ocean Conservancy
Save Our Shores | The Surfrider Foundation | World Wildlife Fund
Pat Lovejoy, Michelle Newman, Paul Pearah, Marc Shargel

Chair Philip Isenberg and Task Force Members
California Resources Agency
1416 9th Street #1311
Sacramento, CA 95814
c/o Melissa Miller-Henson, Communications and Operations Director
via e-Mail.

Dear Mr. Chair and Blue Ribbon Task Force Members:

Thank you for accepting these comments on the MLPA *Central Coast Project Area Selection* and *Stakeholder Involvement Strategies*. The Coalition of Organizations for Ocean Life (COOL) is a gathering of marine conservation organizations and recreational ocean enthusiasts concerned with the health of California's oceans. COOL was formed in August of 2001. COOL's members include large NGO groups with statewide, national, or international scope, as well as smaller, more local groups as well as informed individual citizens. COOL's primary focus and greatest base of knowledge is the coast of Santa Cruz and Monterey Counties; the group has significant resources in San Mateo County and an interest in San Luis Obispo County. Our small-group and individual members possess hard-to-get detailed local knowledge of these coastal areas based on years of personal experience. All of our members, both group and individual, had been active in the MLPA process well before the coalition formed. The Mission of the Coalition of Organizations for Ocean Life is to foster the creation of a network of marine reserves that will help restore, enhance and protect the diversity and abundance of California's marine life and

underwater habitats, and to educate the public on the value of marine reserves and healthy oceans.

MLPA Central Coast Project Area Selection

As a group, we agree with comments submitted by NRDC and The Ocean Conservancy: the Project Area should be large enough to host an effective network of marine reserves and protected areas, as required by the MLPA. It should similarly be large enough to permit the design of multiple alternative siting options. Selection among alternatives may be an important tool for achieving stakeholder acceptance. In addition, it makes sense to consider biogeographic regions. Ideally, the Area should encompass an entire biogeographic region. The Area should at least contain a range of species, ecosystems and habitat types.

We concur that the Area should be selected for inclusion of existing marine reserves. Though the state's current reserves are tiny, and probably not large enough to be ecologically significant, they can form a foundation for expanded reserves, and/or be surrounded by MPAs with lower levels of protection. In addition, the Project Area should include coastline fronting onshore parks and wilderness areas, which might be considered for seaward extension to MPAs, if other criteria are met. As non-consumptive ocean users, we encourage you to consider areas of high recreational usage, where the MLPA goal "To improve recreational, educational, and study opportunities provided by marine ecosystems that are subject to minimal human disturbance" can be satisfied by the creation of accessible, no-take reserves. The Monterey Bay Region, in particular, sees heavy recreational visitor traffic, often concentrated into remarkably small areas. Historically, many such areas have been over-exploited by extractive users. Cannery Row, Monastery Beach, and Point Lobos Reserve are a few well-known examples. Areas of this type offer opportunities for reserve proposals that offer high educational and social value. Marine life preservation (as the recovered ecosystem at Point Lobos) and recovery (as at Cannery Row, the proposed Ricketts Reserve) may be witnessed by many people. Only a few miles away may be areas that receive light use, and have historically sustained far less extraction. The area south of Point Lobos, offshore Garrapata State Park, is one such area, though in very recent years rockfish populations there have been taken down to lower levels.

Stakeholder Involvement Strategies

We agree with Surfrider Foundation's suggestion, echoed by NRDC, that the Task Force encourage informal conversations among various groups of interested parties, with clear guidelines, to help build relationships and develop common ground. Informal "good faith" discussions should be viewed favorably and the results of these informal meetings should be given due weight. We believe the Task Force should make this a clearly stated intent, and that some guidance for such discussions be made available. For example, the Task Force should make available: some means of determining if a specific proposal meets the goals of MLPA, means of determining if it meets scientific criteria for "including protection of representative and unique marine life habitats," and means to determine if it has been "designedŠ as a network." Those means might be written documents, or if possible, members of the Science Team, or Task Force itself, to consult with such self-assembled discussion groups.

We agree also with concerns you've received regarding Task Force selection of stakeholders to include in the "Supplemental Strategies." We believe that criticisms that plagued previous MLPA false-starts can be avoided by allowing stakeholders to select themselves. Just who has

knowledge, or passion about these issues may be surprising. They'll want to be heard, maybe even insist on it. You can and should, however, carefully select members of groups which must do productive negotiating, to be good representatives and good-faith participants. Likewise, self-selected informal groups that can present proposals generated by or agreeable to disparate points of view should be respected. Task Force efforts to seek out "stakeholders" should include members of the public, in whose trust these resources are held, yet whose voices have not been heard thus far.

Finally, we'd like to underscore Surfrider's point about the difference between fisheries management and ecosystem protection. Marine reserves are likely to benefit fisheries, but in MLPA they are not primarily intended as a fishery management tool. They *will* result in increased density and diversity of a *wide range* of marine species, not just the ones people like to eat. It should be made clear to all that *this* MLPA process is about *how* to designate a network of reserves and other MPAs (which can and should complement fishery management), not *whether* it is good for one particular set of interests.

In general, we want to commend the work of the Task Force to date. It has been focused, sincere, and impressively productive. We believe you should demand no less of the stakeholders who participate in the process, going forward. It has been said elsewhere that you should value and seek out good faith participants, while minimizing the influence of those who would disrupt the work. We agree with this entirely. At the same time, the complaints of the loudest detractors have been about dis-inclusion. Therefore we think it important to offer means for *all* to voice, or if necessary *vent*, their concerns, and to know that they have been heard. At the same time, those "cooler heads" doing the work of moving the process forward should be aware of, but not derailed by, those concerns. We realize this is a difficult balance, and we perceive that you are already sensitive to it. Your stress on open-ness, use of technology to increase participation, and assembly of the SIG are all positive steps. Plans for wide distribution of the final *Interested Public and Stakeholder Involvement Strategies* document are also positive. We appreciate the recognition, in the document's title, that traditional "stakeholders" are not the only Californians who have an interest, or a stake, in the health of our ocean. We again commend and support your efforts to be as inclusive as possible, while managing a process that will be focused, sincere and productive.

Your work has been, and continues to be, a genuine public service. Thank you! And thank you for the opportunity to comment.

Sincerely,

Marc Shargel
COOL Chair
for The Members of COOL

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Marc Shargel, Chair,
The Coalition of Organizations for Ocean Life

"The mission of the Coalition of Organizations for Ocean Life is to foster the creation of a network of marine reserves that will help restore, enhance and protect the diversity and abundance of California's marine life and underwater habitats, and to educate the public on the value of marine reserves and healthy oceans."

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